

JAMES

Main Idea of James	James encourages his readers to live out their faith in Christ by doing good works.
Title	This epistle is named after its author (1:1).
Background and Setting	<p>The recipients are identified only in 1:1 as “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.” While some believe that this expression refers to Christians in general, the term “twelve tribes” would more naturally apply to Jewish Christians. Furthermore, a Jewish audience is more likely given the obviously Jewish nature of the letter (e.g., the use of the Hebrew title for God, <i>kyrios sabaoth</i>, “Lord Almighty,” 5:4).</p> <p>In 1:1 the author identifies himself as “James, the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” No other identification is given. The New Testament mentions four men by the name of James. It is probable that the writer of this epistle is to be identified with one of them. The four who are called James in the New Testament are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. James the father of Judas (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13), probably identified with Thaddaeus or Lebbaeus, to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot (Mark 3:18; Matthew 10:3).B. James the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) is an unlikely candidate because he is an obscure apostle, mentioned only in lists of apostles and disciples.C. James the son of Zebedee and brother of John (Matt. 4:21; 10:2; 17:1; Mark 1:19, 29; 3:17; 10:35; 13:3; Luke 9:28; Acts 1:13; 12:2) is an important figure in the Gospels, less so in Acts due to his early death as a martyr under Herod Agrippa I no later than the spring of 44 BC (Acts 12:2). This James does not seem to have had sufficient recognition in the early church to have written an encyclical letter.

D. James the Lord's brother (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:19; called simply James in Acts: 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; and in 1 Cor. 15:7), mentioned only twice by name in the Gospels (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), he rises to prominence after Pentecost. Arguably, James became the de facto leader of the Jerusalem church sometime before AD 44, and was one of two leaders Paul met with in Jerusalem three years after Paul's conversion (Gal. 1:19). The assignment of this James (also known in later church traditions as "James the Just") as author of the letter has been the traditional view. He was martyred in approximately AD 62.

Key Themes

There are nine key themes in James:

1. God is seen as a gracious giver, the unchanging Creator, merciful and compassionate, a Judge, the one and only God, a jealous God, a gracious God, and a healing God (1:5, 17-18; 2:5, 13, 19; 4:5-6; 5:1-3, 9, 15).
2. Wisdom comes "from above" and enables one both to withstand trials and to bring peace rather than discord (1:5; 3:13, 17).
3. God allows tests and trials (1:2-4), but temptation comes not from God but from self and Satan. The required response is patient endurance (1:3, 13-14; 4:7; 5:7-8).
4. The primary trial is poverty and oppression from the rich. The poor are the special focus of God's care and must be cared for by His people and not shown prejudice or ignored. The wealthy are condemned for presumptuous pride and for stealing from the poor (1:9, 27; 2:1-5, 15-16; 4:13-17; 5:1-6).
5. Apocalyptic themes are prevalent in terms of both future judgment and reward (1:12; 2:5, 12-13; 3:1; 4:12; 5:1-7, 9, 20).
6. The power of the tongue to destroy or to bring peace dominates the middle section (3:1-4:12).
7. The ethical mandate to go beyond hearing the word to living it out in daily conduct is

made explicit early on and is implicit throughout the letter (1:19-27; 2:14-26).

8. Prayer is the proper response to trials, but it must not be self-seeking. It is to be central in life not only when afflicted or sick but also when cheerful. God has great power to heal, both physically and spiritually (1:5-7; 4:2-3; 5:13-18).
9. Faith, in its relationship to both works and justification, does not contradict but supplements Paul's teaching. James and Paul are united in teaching that justification comes only by the grace of God through faith but will of necessity result in works. If there are no resultant works, there was no justification in the first place (2:14-26).

Jesus in James

James openly refers to Christ only twice (1:1; 2:1), yet his epistle abounds with references to Christ's teachings, particularly to the Sermon on the Mount. James' application of truth to his readers' lives gives believers a clearer understanding of Christ's wisdom.

Key Verse(s)

James 2:26: For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Key People in James

There is one group of people in James:
a) The believers-persecuted Jewish believers dispersed throughout the Roman Empire (1:1-5:20).

Unique Characteristics

There are five unique characteristics in James:

1. Numerous allusions to Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (see chart).
2. The book, written in an excellent Greek style, reads very much like a number of sermon summaries, all of which are related to the central theme of a genuine faith which works.
3. James contains 108 verses and in those verses he gives 54 imperatives to communicate the need for urgent action.
4. Certain issues receive special treatment by James: riches, tongue, impartiality, doing good, and self-control.

5. James is partial to certain words and uses them repeatedly:
 - a. *Faith* (12 times)
 - b. *Work/works* (12 times)

Simple Outline

- I. Greeting (1:1).
- II. The Testing of Faith (1:2-18).
- III. Hearing and Doing the Word (1:19-27).
- IV. The Sin of Partiality (2:1-13).
- V. Faith Without Works is Dead (2:14-26).
- VI. The Sin of Dissension in the Community (3:1-4:12).
- VII. The Sins of the Wealthy (4:13-5:12).
- VIII. The Prayer of Faith (5:13-18).
- IX. Conclusion (5:19-20).

Special Challenges

- There are two:
1. In 2:14-26, what is the relationship between faith and works? Does James contradict the teachings of the Apostle Paul?
 2. In 5:13-18, do the promises of healing refer to spiritual or physical healing?

Similarities between the Teaching of James and Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount

Subject	James	Jesus
Joy in the midst of trials	1:2	Matthew 5:10-12
Exhortation to perfection	1:4	Matthew 5:48
Asking for good gifts	1:5	Matthew 7:7
Against anger	1:20	Matthew 5:22
Hearers and doers of the word	1:22	Matthew 7:24
The whole Law to be kept	2:10	Matthew 5:19
Blessings of mercifulness	2:13	Matthew 5:17
Blessing of peacemakers	3:18	Matthew 5:19
Friendship of the world as enmity against God	4:4	Matthew 6:24
Against judging others	4:11-12	Matthew 7:1-5
Moth and rust spoil riches	5:22ff	Matthew 6:19
The prophets as examples	5:10	Matthew 5:12
Against oaths	5:12	Matthew 5:33-37

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Faith	When stretched, it doesn't break.	When pressed, it doesn't fail.	When expressed, it doesn't explode.	When distressed, it doesn't panic.
Deeds	Authentic stability	Authentic love	Authentic control and humility	Authentic patience
	<u>Greeting</u>	<u>Partiality and prejudice</u>	<u>The tongue</u>	<u>Money matters</u>
	<u>Trials</u>	<u>Indifference and mere intellectualism</u>	<u>The heart</u>	<u>Sickness</u>
	<u>Temptation</u>	<u>Obedience and action</u>	<u>The will</u>	<u>Carnality and correction</u>
	<u>Response to Scripture</u>			
	<i>CHAPTER 1</i>	<i>CHAPTER 2</i>	<i>CHAPTERS 3-4</i>	<i>CHAPTER 5</i>
Background	The difficulties of life caused the scattered saints to drift spiritually, leading to all forms of problems—unbridled speech, wrong attitudes, doubt, strife, carnality, shallow faith.			
Characteristics	"The Proverbs of the New Testament," James contains many practical, straightforward exhortations. Emphasis is on importance of balancing right belief with right behavior. The book has many Old Testament word pictures and references.			
Theme	Real faith produces authentic deeds.			
Key Verse	2:17			
Christ in James	Jesus is the glorious Lord, who inspires true faith and authentic works (2:1, 14-26).			